

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for processing flat media, comprising:
- an indexer at a first elevation;
 - a docking station at a second elevation higher than the first elevation;
 - a transfer station adjacent to the docking station;
 - a process station;
 - and a robot movable between the transfer station and the process station, for moving flat media between them.
2. The system of claim 1 further including a loader associated with the indexer, the loader having a load elevator for moving a closed pod of flat media between an up position, and a down position, and with the load elevator in the down position substantially aligned with the indexer at the first elevation.
3. The system of claim 2 with the loader having a loader conveyor for moving a pod from the loader onto the indexer.
4. The system of claim 1 with the indexer comprising at least one drive section having a plurality of rollers for supporting a pod, and with a drive motor linked to at least one of the rollers.

5. The system of claim 4 where the rollers support the pod only at the outside lateral edges of the pod.

6. The system of claim 1 where the indexer comprises a first row and second row parallel to the first row, and at least one shuttle device for moving a pod from the first row to the second row.

7. The system of claim 6 where the shuttle device moves a pod in a direction perpendicular to the direction that the rollers move the pod.

8. The system of claim 1 further including at least one docking station elevator for moving a pod vertically from the first elevation to the docking station at the second elevation.

9. The system of claim 1 further comprising a pod door remover at the docking station.

10. The system of claim 2 with the loader further comprising a pod rotator.

11. A method for processing at least one wafer contained within a closed pod, comprising the steps of:
removing the at least one wafer from the pod;

transferring the at least one wafer into a carrier, while maintaining the at least one wafer in a substantially horizontal orientation;

engaging the carrier with a robot arm;

5 pivoting the carrier so that the at least one wafer is moved into a non-horizontal orientation, so that the at least one wafer is held within the carrier at least in part by gravity;

moving the robot with the carrier to a processor;

placing the carrier with the at least one wafer into the processor.

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12. A method for processing wafers provided within a closed pod, comprising the steps of:

placing the pod onto a loader;

lowering the pod from a first elevation to a second elevation;

moving the pod from the loader to an indexer at the second elevation; and

15 moving the pod to a docking station by lifting the pod from the second elevation to a third elevation above the first and second elevations.

20 13. The method of claim 12 further including the step of rotating the pod 180 degrees on a pod rotator in the loader.

14. The method of claim 12 where the indexer has a first row and a second row, and further including the step of shuttling the pod from the first row to the second row.

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add C3
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